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# Four Quarters

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# A Portfolio of Poets

**"Though leaves are many, the root is one"**
**—Yeats**

*The following portfolio of poets is very special for readers of* Four Quarters *and friends of La Salle. Each of the contributors has studied at the College. Most are alumni. Many have had work published here before as undergraduates—a rare distinction. And one is currently a part-time student.*

*I am especially pleased to be able to look back, as instructor and Poetry Editor, at the talent we have fostered. Through the teaching of my colleagues, headed by that superlative professor of creative writing, Claude Koch, and the encouragement of our former President, Brother Daniel Burke, both of whose remarkable poems often grace these pages, our student writers have flourished. The culmination of my own efforts as poetry booster involved the organization of an annual workshop several years ago. In attendance were the likes of Gwendolyn Brooks, John Logan, Lucille Clifton, William Heyen, Al Poulin, and the late Anne Sexton. Under the spell of such luminaries our young writers began to shed their own lovely light.*

*The works that follow reveal, for the most part, where our talented poets have journeyed in that post-graduate period that Auden called the unhappiest time. Happily, they have continued to produce significant work. Practically all have published elsewhere; some are fortunate to enjoy professions that involve the creative use of their typewriters.*

*Justin Carisio will be attending writing seminars at Johns Hopkins this fall. Having completed an M.A. in English at Ohio University, Dennis Doyle will enter another masters program in religious studies at Catholic University. Studying with W. D. Snodgrass, Henry Jankiewicz earned his masters from Syracuse University, where he has been teaching and playing "semi-*

*professional fiddle" in a jug band.*

*Publications Editor at Pittsburgh's Chatham College, Chris Hoffner free-lances for several periodicals as well. After a stint at Transylvania College, Anne Maxwell has become a housing contractor in Lexington, Kentucky; she regularly meets with other women writers there. Tim Dlugos has published widely in Washington and in New York City, where he now lives and writes fund-raising copy.*

*Managing a French restaurant here in Philadelphia provides Karen Bennett with unusual poetic inspiration, and Ira Shaffer has found his niche as Energy Coordinator in City Hall. With an M.A. in Anglo-Irish literature from University College Dublin, Mike Toner heads the medical library at the city's Scheie Eye Institute. Working for a local radio station gives Neil Scranton the opportunity to yoke his prolific energies to another form of creative expression.*

*Substitute teaching and writing for local newspapers have kept Greg Scirrotto busy here in town. Having his M.A. from the University of Florida, Joe Meredith has joined the teaching ranks back at La Salle; our readers will recall his recent tour of duty as Poetry Editor.*

*Certainly not finally we have Daniel Walker, a student who writes with the promising zeal that has made our retrospective collection of La Salle poets so resplendent.*

*A serious survey of the poems that follow will reveal extraordinary talent. What impresses most, perhaps, is the versatility of the voices. All the poets may have had their training here, but there the commonality ends. Although the forms, the diction, the poetic structures vary, the imaginative power and creative surety have fulfilled every expectation.*

*Here, then, a florilegium we are proud to have nurtured.*

*—R. L.*

# Intimations of Closing on Opening Night

JOSEPH E. MEREDITH

The night you came, had I not sweated there,
biting my lip each time your mother winced,
primed for the gory climax of the scene
laboring nearer, I should never be convinced
such a thing had happened: the birth of light and air.

Almost. No witches' milk, no waxy scrim
to dim the glow, no slit-eyed tragic mask
to hint the thing is dust and must return.
But open-eyed you came, and sighing. As much to ask,
"Am I awake?" or "Where have I been?"

And only this to mark you: emphatic in the light,
just behind the pulsing fontanel—
at the crown of your head—a simple smear of blood.
Then a denouement of cleansing and none could tell,
the play complete, what I took into the night.

# Narcissus Bereft

HENRY JANKIEWICZ

Shut-eye, he knew who he was. When he stood
inside himself, his right was right,
his left was left. He was secure
before the eyes of earth and heaven.

Until he went before his own.
He held an apple in his left hand—
the mirror claimed it was his right.
This made him unsure, and strange.

The photographs were different again.
He stared out of strangers' eyes, straight
into his own, left into right,
right into left, and turn as he might

physics hid his body from him;
when he flipped the picture over
to set his sides straight, to face
himself right—he drew a blank.

Now he has no idea what
is. In his naked eyes, his body is
headless, upside down. Deep
inside, he is invisible.

# The Furthest Adventures of Nancy Drew

CHRISTINE HOFFNER

Your stocking seams were as straight as Ned Nickerson.
You discovered adventures among gentler pastimes, usually
on the advice of famed attorney Carson Drew (your dad)
who actually said Pshaw instead of shit
and whose legal practice was probably a genteel family myth.

In your roadster, however, you covered impressive ground.
No hunch was ever wrong: no surly man who failed to tip his hat
in Chapter One had finally gotten less than murder two.
And the clues flashed forties neon, bolting out of trees
at chapter ends look out!

And instantly your reflexes deflected
some murderous moving object, powerboat
or boa constrictor, from those poor,
funloving elephants, Bess and George, who trailed
behind the roadster on a bus, always lagging,
paying for their flings by being
gassed or gagged.

Some evening at The Lake
with the roadster at the curb,
and Carson dozing off, and
Bess and George gone off to—pshaw,
would Ned Nickerson suddenly
tickle your thigh
and suggest, "Let's get high"?

# Death of the Aerialist

JUSTIN CARISIO

The eyes of obsessed men turn to glass
With age. They cease to observe omens,
Their glint freezes, their stare congeals. Out of sync
With the body, they betray the ultimate acumen.

Scores of years on the wire brought him
To this: gypsy prayers to a God of charms,
Unholy lust for the forbidden geometry,
The blasphemy of inviting temptation with outstretched arms.

And the stare the moment pole met wire in brief
Cruciform, and the body jerked out of grace.
Defeated, he perched on his haunches overlooking the deep
The onlooking world— then collapse, token grasp

Release and fly. What he did in the end
He did freely: Before the vacant gaze
Of the dumbstruck, he abandoned his curious tangent
And flew at his foe with an ancient rage.

# the employer

ANNE MAXWELL

from his first day on the job
in clothes undoubtedly rolled into pillows
whenever he wasn't wearing them, I knew
I didn't like him

suffered him five months anyway, surly, erratic
baiting me into argument, the permanent ghost
of alcohol trembling in his hands

fired him, finally, while he cried and dramatized

booted him, with absolute satisfaction, out of my
daily operation, offering my hand, a drink sometime

offering friendship in the style of
the man who cannot lay a woman without telling
her he loves her, knowing full well he won't even
offer her breakfast

# White Petals

TIM DLUGOS

*"The Republic lies in the blossoms of Washington." —Robert Bly*

White petals
drop into the dark river.
Heedless of political significance,
they ride out to the sea like stars.

I'm the space explorer.
I travel to a planet
where there are not plants or animals.
Everyone lives in harmony.
I don't want to go home.

I'm the pioneer man and the pioneer woman,
both at the same time.
I build my house with my own hands,
and it's beautiful,
with simple, perfect lines.

I'm the farmer waiting for the vegetables
to grow, so I can eat.
I'm the hunter aiming at the bear.
I don't want to shoot it, but my family needs meat.
The bear gives me a long dumb animal look.
We'll use his skin for blankets,
his fat to light our lamps.
Our cabin will stink all night.

I'm the cabin boy who graduates to captain.
Shipboard sex is rough, but it suits my taste.
I'm the man on the steps of the house
where the President's widow lives.
All night I wait for the stranger
to get out of his car
so I can flash my look of recognition.

I'm the cowpoke who sleeps with his horses,
I'm the man who loves dogs.
I'm the cranky President sneaking away
to swim in the Potomac.

I'm the black man.
I close my eyes
and it gets dark inside.

I feel the sun in my face.
I see the light through my eyelids.
It's bright, intelligent,
free of all cares.

I'm the heir of a great American family.
My success is guaranteed.
Unexpected tragedy is all that can stop me.
I'm the popular senator teaching his son to shave.

# Indications of the Internal

DENNIS DOYLE

Officially, I don't care about you.
You could, according to policy, die,
And it wouldn't faze me in the slightest.
Deep down, however, on the gut level,
I've noticed insurrectionist rumblings
That worry about what you've had for breakfast,
And I've detected rebellious tremors
That wonder if you've dressed warmly.
What had been practical legislation
Has gone far beyond practicality.
Revolution looms imminent. There is
Feeding and clothing to be done.

# Ink

KAREN BENNETT

Sweet Cuban coffee feeds our dreams,
some sweet colombian we smoked
before we drank. Like ink, the marrow
in our bones like sap; like lines that cross,
our bodies' interchange. I inch my spine
to make me flat and let a sentence string—
foot at the head, stomach at the verb.
Your eyes like giant commas, beautiful
and black. A needed pause along your torso's
curve, and then
                my caffeinated body swims.
                The bed is a crumpled page
smudged by our fingerprints and sweat.
Just before sleep, my mind becomes a transom
spilling poems; your mouth, a predicate.

# Lady Kay

M. P. TONER

Not for your firstcrop
burgundied whispering
only, dandelion kisses

and hint of ripening
blossoms on an April bough,
that pursed lingering

nor to be cap-a-pied
wild and inebriate, staggering
bold into your eyes

wassail-drowned
at a mere gesture, nor
in the sorceried

passage of your limbs
twining my words dumb
to their origin, bound
by your coven smile;

but for your gathering
handfold of dawn and dusk
fingertipped summons

voice metaphysical
singing my captive name
with all that vowelling
rhythm.

# Dying Harvest

DANIEL WALKER

The dried apricot roads
smooth out like porcelain
and spread lake-like
across the valley of sun.

Crawling invaders thrive
in the mud-like consistency
of the passway and make
summer cottages out of
cool crevices.

Castings of barnyard
truckwheels reveal
memories and visions
of the corn carried
Long ago.

The old blue wheatfields,
quiet for some time now,
the blasting sun has done its job.

For many years the yield
was full, but the 'weevils
went to work with great
diligence, and the frosty
field froze to stone.

A cool crude death
came with the winds, but
the biting air retired on
that Sunday when we
went to pay respects.

And again we rode
those cracking lines to
travel back to town,
the sun would follow
close behind, preparing
for our next harvest . . .

# Prayer: To Burn

GREGORY SCIRROTTO

God the Father
of all things good & great
of fire & cruel waters
of bright babies in the midnight
of men as beat as babies are bright.

God the Son
who took the pain of the nails
who died sweaty & smudged like an idol
who rose again like Houdini
who has no passion for fire.

God the Scoundrel Spirit
that has counted the weight of centuries
that has never returned the ounce
                of a moment
that has seen the flames
                that make men noble.

This is my body.

# Muerta

I. D. SHAFFER

Yes, the night does not exist
For a lonely gaucho
Awaiting the advent of Christmas:
It is rather the lament of guitars.

Yes, it is a race with the devil
On a Spanish highway
And I am naked and fugitive
On these high plains
In a landscape of lizards
And cold absence of lilies.

Yes, each dawn I drink blood
From the heart of an Inca king
And break teeth on the spine
Of a condor blessed by saints.

Yes, the eyes are a dry river
And my sanctuary is a suicide's grave
When I cancel the past
When the moon sinks in water.

Yes, only a dream reveals
Where the sea begins:
But I will come to
A beach covered with tar
And there stop the waves
With my hands.

# Introduction & Fanfare

NEIL SCRANTON

There's a certain amount of faith I find
necessary to live in the world. Prove
to me nothing which I could not take blind,

and I will tell you, warm in my snug groove,
that it's only the broken shelf of the mind
we start to repair when we try to love.

# Contributors

After seven years as president of La Salle College, DANIEL BURKE, F.S.C. resumes full-time teaching as professor of English this term. His verse and criticism have appeared in *Commonweal, Thought, Journal of Arts and Letters, Modern Fiction Studies,* and elsewhere. For the last four years Martha Foley's annual *Best American Short Stories* has listed fiction by LESTER GOLDBERG; he was a Yaddo Fellow for 1977, and his collection, *One More River,* has just been published by the University of Illinois Press. LOUIS DANIEL BRODSKY has published six collections of poems. His newest book, *La Preciosa,* is a paean for his little daughter, Trilogy Maya. A former Stegner Fellow in Fiction at Stanford, WILLIAM MICKLEBERRY currently teaches at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Work by JULIA BUDENZ has appeared in several American and British journals; she is associated with a research project at Harvard. RUTH MOON KEMPHER, a frequent contributor, attended Friends Select here in Philadelphia. She recently published another Hilda note in *The Chicago Review.* A story by EUGENE K. GARBER was in *Best American Short Stories 1977* and in *Pushcart Prize II*; other fiction has appeared in *Paris Review, Sewanee Review, Hudson Review,* and elsewhere. He directs the writing program at SUNY at Albany. NANCY WESTERFIELD travels for the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska as a member of its Executive Council and as an executive of its Department of Mission. Her recent publications include work in *Commonweal, Western Humanities Review, Blackwood's,* and *Wascana Review.* LEE UPTON writes about entertainment and the arts for the *State Journal* in East Lansing, Michigan, and conducts a poetry workshop there. A native of Montana, EVE DAVIS graduated from the University of Pittsburgh and now lives in Boalsburg, Pa. A few years ago she began studying creative writing with Claude Koch at La Salle. JEAN LEAVITT describes herself as a feminist/socialist. She has worked in places as diverse as American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia and Mt. Silinda Institute in Zimbabwe, Rhodesia.

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